

FROM CONVERSATIONS WITH SALES LEADERS ON THE  
"SALES ENABLEMENT PODCAST WITH ANDY PAUL"

# 56 Top Habits of High Growth Sales Leaders



**Andy Paul** SALES THOUGHT LEADER & BEST-SELLING AUTHOR

 ringDNA

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# Introduction by Andy Paul

I believe that long-term consistent success in sales primarily derives from a solid foundation of habits. They're what I call Sales Habits.

Practice a particular sales behavior on a regular basis and it becomes a habit. Practice a habit on a rigorous basis and it becomes a skill.

Over the course of conducting interviews for *Sales Enablement Podcast with Andy Paul*, my top-rated sales podcast, I've asked hundreds of the leading sales and marketing practitioners from the world's most exciting companies the following question:

**"What's the one sales habit sellers need to master in order to have a successful career?"**

This book is a collection of some of the more valuable answers I received. You'll find a wide variety of opinions about what a seller needs to do to become a success.

You won't agree with every recommendation. That's good.

Your mission with this book is to gain some new insights into habits you can adopt that will positively transform an aspect of your life.

Pick one or two habits that resonate with you, that line up with the challenges you face, and then try them out.

Whether you are building the perfect sales process for your company or working on onboarding new sales teams, these timeless pieces of advice will serve any team of sellers.

Thanks!



Andy Paul



## Adam Honig

CEO at Spiro.ai

01

Focus on listening in sales and making sure that you're listening properly to understand the customer and make sure that you're really getting to what their objection or goal is in relation to what you're doing. It's the combination of giving them a little bit about whatever your offering to get them interested. And then really listening well.



## Allison Graham

Consultant, Author of *Married My Mom Birthed a Dog: How to be Resilient When Life Sucks*

02

They need to be resilient. Sales reps have to make sure that whatever is happening behind the scenes of their life is not going to come front and center when they are in a sales meeting or serving a client. They need to be able to compartmentalize those two things, and bounce back after a "no" or bounce back after a losing a contract. The ability to be resilient, I think is the number one skill every salesperson must master.



## Andy Molinsky

Professor at Brandeis International Business School, Writer for Harvard Business Review

03

Learning to step outside your comfort zone. Which I think is the case for a lot of entrepreneurs that turn into sales people. They might not be sales people by nature. However, they realize that to be able to support and sustain their business, they need to become sales people. Therefore, stepping out of their comfort zone (is the number one habit.)



## Anthony Iannarino

Best-selling Author of *The Only Sales Guide You'll Ever Need*, *The Lost Art of Closing: Winning the Ten Commitments that Drive Sales*

04

Cold calling. Plain and simple. If you are in sales, you do two things. You create opportunities, and you capture opportunities.



## Bill Eckstrom

President at EcSell Institute

05

When they take a job with any company, they should find out to whom they report and get to know that person well. Because that person will either help them get to places they're not capable of without them, or they're going to make their life miserable, or somewhere in between. Select your manager, or what we call your coach, wisely.



## Brian Lambert

President & Chief Performance Officer at Growth Matters Americas

06

I think most salespeople need to do a better job at understanding their customer. I travel around the world and I do a lot of engagements with salespeople, and I have a simple test. I'd like to offer that to your listeners. I would challenge your listeners to grab a buddy and time themselves. Talk about their customers challenges, problems, and a day in the life of their customer. See how long they can go without ever talking about their solution, their product, or their actual company. I would submit that, out of thousands of people that have taken this test, if you can only go three or four minutes about your customer's real world reality, you've got a problem.



## Carlos Hidalgo

Chief Strategy Officer at DemandGen

07

They need to know about all their buyers, because very rarely do we sell to just one anymore. They need to know as much about that individual as possible. How do they buy? What are their paying points and what are their challenges? Buyers are very attuned to what they need. And what I always tell salespeople, "It's not what you want to say. It's what your buyer needs to hear."



## Chris Smith

Co-founder of Curaytor

08

Enthusiasm. You know, your dog when the delivery comes, doesn't care if it's a bill or a birthday present. They are just excited that the doorbell rang. And so if you don't have that internal excitement for life, for the product, for the company, for the leadership, you're never gonna have a great career in sales. All the skills in the world aren't as important as that natural enthusiasm for the job.



## Conner Burt

President at Lessonly

09

I'll give you a one word answer. Curiosity. The ability to drill into the right questions that help unearth the prospect to think in different ways, is how I would define curiosity for the seller.



## Daniel McGinn

Senior Editor at Harvard Business Review

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I think that the biggest thing that people can do to see incremental performance enhancement is to think not just about their sales pitch, not just about the substance, the product, but think about their emotions and think about their mindset before they go into a call. In the final few minutes (before a call) thinking about your mindset, confidence and your emotional state is what will get you ready to really crush it.



## Darlene Mann

COO of StreetLight Data

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Sellers need to be infinitely curious about the buyers that they're trying to engage with, and take the time to research and understand who those people are before they reach out. I think the number one selling habit is keeping track of the people that you're going to talk to and really trying to understand who they are.



## David Brunner

CEO & Founder of ModuleQ

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Persistence. That you have to be willing to take the refusals and rejections in stride and just keep on going, and keep on learning, and keep at it because eventually you break through.



## David JP Fisher

13

Keynote speaker & Author of Hyper-Connected Selling: Winning More Business by Leveraging Digital Influence and Creating Human Connection

The biggest thing you can do is become an autodidact. Become self teaching and spend 15 minutes to 30 minutes every day learning, whether that's through reading, (listening to) podcasts like this, watching videos. You've got to invest in continuous improvements and upgrading of your mind.



## Derek Wyszynski

14

Director of Sales at Parallels North America

Prospecting. The ability to understand where your customers are and where they're having conversations right now is incredibly important. Part of that has to do with having a robust referral process. That's the ability to look at current customers that you have and engage them in conversations where they'll go ahead and turn into evangelists for your solution, or for your product and bring clients to you.



## Drew Neisser

15

Founder & CEO of Renegade

I'm going to cheat and give you my acronym CATS (Courage, Artful, Thoughtful, and Scientific). Those four things, and when it comes to a sales person, the courage to be unique, I think is really important. They have to find their individualism within the company that they're selling for.



## Eddie Yoon

16

Founder of EddieWouldGrow, Author of *Superconsumers* by HBR, & Contributor at HBR

Keep a journal. I do mine early in the morning when I first get up. I process what happened the day before. I think that for me, has been extraordinarily valuable for me in my career. Keep it with somebody else so that you have some accountability there.



## Evan Carmichael

Author of *Built to Serve*

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The most important selling habit is building up a trusted relationship with those that you are working with. Today, it's all about an ROI for the buyer and the seller and finding a winwin collaboration. In building that over time, what you're selling will help them succeed and therefore help both of you succeed simultaneously.



## Evan Hackel

Founder & CEO of Ingage Consulting

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To get their customers to explain to them why what they're selling will be a value to them. Rather than the salesperson explaining it to the customer, get the customer to explain it to the salesperson. When the customer explains why what they're selling is valuable to them, in their own words, they're sold.



## Fred Shilmover

Founder & CEO at InsightSquared

19

When hard work meets opportunity that's how you generate your own luck. There's a very high correlation with people who are the hardest working and quite frankly people who wake up in the morning the earliest and kinda rise and grind.



## Gavin Zuchlinski

VP of Acuity at Squarespace

20

The habit is being able to understand that you're not selling the customer, you're serving the customer to a better need, to a better want, to a desire. You're giving them something, or offering them a solution to a problem they have.





## George Brontén

21

CEO, Founder, & Sales Effectiveness  
Pioneer of Membrain.com

They need to be able to ask intelligent questions that progress the buyer towards buying something. A question that somehow moves the buyer, or helps the buyer take steps in their mind that gets them closer to wanting or needing what you're offering.



## Godard Abel

22

Co-founder & CEO of G2.com  
(formerly G2 Crowd)

Getting better every meeting. The best sales executives I've seen really work really hard to prepare for every meeting. We need to get better at every meeting.



## Henry Schuck

23

CEO & Co-founder of ZoomInfo  
(formerly DiscoverOrg)

It's less about the habit and more about the diligence around making something into a habit.



## Hugh MacFarlane

24

Founder & CEO of align.me

Asking great questions in the right order. Uncover the gap challenge impediment first, and then get clarity on what the need is, and then argue the benefits of the solution. The right order would be to get to the heart, quickly, of the issue that needs to be solved, to then shape the solution against that.



## Jacco vanderKooij 25

Founder, Co-CEO, & Keynote Speaker of Winning by Design

Taking notes. It is an outdated technique, a lot of people think that they can do it electronically, but taking good notes is one of the key skills that a sales professional needs to master.



## Jane Gentry 26

CEO of Fusion Event Staffing / JWilliams Agency

Relationship building. I spend a lot of time with clients helping them learn how to build relationships. And it is becoming a great skill gap in younger generations. So it's even more important for us to be able to help young sellers, learn how to build great relationships.



## Jay Baer 27

Founder, Content Marketing Strategy, Social Media Strategy, Word of Mouth Strategy, CX Strategy at Convince & Convert

I believe that sales people need to get manifestly good at video. Increasingly, people are consuming less and less written content, whether it's emails, white papers, anything of that sort, and more and more of video and audio content. I use ViewedIt, which you can just do right out of your browser, and then it sends as a regular email, and just you know, you knock it out in 30 seconds.



## Jeff Davis 28

Founder & Principal of JD2 Consulting, Author of *Create Togetherness*, & Consultant

I think the one word that comes to my mind is storytelling. Being able to tell a compelling story is, in my mind, the number one thing that any salesperson needs to master. It's about making what you are selling or what solution you're providing relevant to your prospect or your target, and it's helping them understand, "How can I see myself using this and it making my life easier?"



## Jeff Koser

Founder & CEO of Zebrafi, Inc.

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You actually have to hear yourself speak. It's about empathy, but it's also how you relate to what you just said. What might their priorities be, because it might not be you.



## Jim Brown

Sales Coach, Trainer, & Host of the SalesTuners podcast, Co-founder of Share Your Genius, & Investor/Advisor

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Tactical empathy. One of the biggest things that I see sellers have issues with these days is not actually having empathy for the buyer. Now, I don't actually mean you have to truly care and get in to an emotional level with all of your buyers, but practice tactical empathy at scale for sure. Really getting down to that core thing that's driving them, so that's why I'm calling it tactical empathy, it's just absolutely critical.



## Joe Apfelbaum

CEO & Founder of Ajax Union

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The number one habit, is role-play. You need to be an excellent person at role-play, because role-play is practice. Not only do I do it with my sales team, I do it with my account managers, anyone that's client facing needs to be roleplaying, because if not, you're practicing with the customer.



## John Jantsch

Founder & President of Duct Tape Marketing, Best-selling Author of *Duct Tape Marketing*, & TEDx Speaker

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Constantly thinking of ways to add more value. I think the best advice is that once you start building relationships, is to find out how can you build them deeper. I think your greatest source of leads are always going to be those happy customers. And those happy customers are probably people that really depend on you and look to you for things maybe beyond what you sell. And that's because you've continued to add value.



## Judy Robinett

33

Founder & President of JRobinett Enterprises, Startup Funding Expert, Speaker, & Author of *Crack the Funding Code*

Be scrappy and get out of your comfort zone. Scrappy for me is beyond grit. It's willing to meet strangers. It's willing to go outside what you normally do so that you can create luck, so you can position yourself to make good things happen.



## Karl Sakas

34

Agency Consultant & Executive Coach at Sakas & Company

Be ready before you get on the phone with a client, with a prospective client. The way I do that is I do a pre-intake questionnaire. It's five questions. Ask people to fill it out ahead of time to make the call better use of time for them as well as for me, and ultimately, I'm a lot more prepared than if I just jumped onto the call.



## Katie Bullard

35

President at A Cloud Guru

One of the things that so many salespeople have lost is the ability to listen. (They need to) listen more than they talk. I think there's this art of learning just to be silent and take a pause in the middle of a conversation, which will then prompt your prospect or your customer to continue to provide additional information.



## Kevin Kruse

36

Founder & CEO of LEADx, & New York Times Best-selling Author

Self-mastery and self-leadership especially around time. The best sales people I've ever known, they sell first thing in the morning. That is their most important task and they do it before anything else can get in the way. Every single morning, they start prospecting. Time blocked.



## Koka Sexton

VP of Marketing at Betts Recruiting

37

Visibility creates opportunity. They need to find ways to become visible and relevant to their buyers, and that will open up many doors for them throughout their entire careers. The one thing I think that salespeople need to start thinking about more, is just this idea of how are they presenting themselves.



## Marshall Goldsmith

#1 Executive Coach, Speaker, Author,  
& Professor of Management Practice

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Put yourself in the other person's position and learn to see the world through their eyes, not through your own eyes.



## Mathew Sweezey

Director of Market Strategy  
at Salesforce, & HBR Author

39

They need to be good teachers. It's kind of simple.



## Matthew Sniff

Founder & CEO of Map My Customers

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Follow up. I think most salespeople who I've been around, and I'm guilty of this as well, is they don't follow up enough. All you're trying to do is get in touch, and eventually you'll get through. It's just that grit and that hard work into following up with customers that most salespeople just fall short on.



**Norman Behar** 41

Founder & Managing Director of Sales Readiness Group

I think it's questioning skills. Making sure it's really a discussion, which includes active listening and at least two thirds of the time is spent listening to the responses to these well thought out questions that really help uncover a customers needs.



**Paul Teshima** 42

Co-founder & CEO of Nudge.ai

I think they need to be really good at taking key facts or key notes during a meeting and recapping that with your customer at the end of the meeting as a validation of what you've learned.



**Rick Nucci** 43

Co-founder & CEO of Guru

Transparency. And that's the sales process being open and enabling the prospect to understand everything they need to make an informed decision.



**Robert Koehler** 44

Director of Sales Effectiveness at Compass

The one habit they need to master is understanding the buyer. It means keeping up on what's happening in their industry, what's happening with their role, where their buyer persona, if you like. It's always ongoing learning, in terms of keeping abreast of what they're really facing.



## Robert Wahbe

CEO of Highspot, Inc.

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Tenacious. I mean that you're working every angle of value. You're talking to the people that are in the account. You're talking to people that know people in the account. You're understanding their pain points. You're revealing pain points as you're talking to them. You're understanding the product deeply, so you can make sure that you're matching the product value to the business needs and the pain points that you're hearing about. It's a constant, constant tenaciousness that really, in my mind, separates the greats from the goods.



## Rowan Tonkin

Senior VP of Marketing at Planful

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Preparation. I think it's something that everyone can do, you don't need any talent to be prepared, and it certainly helps when you are prepared.



## Sam Mallikarjunan

CRO at Flock, & Faculty Chair at University of South Florida

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Listen instead of responding. We immediately want to go into the demo, and we want to talk price, and we want to talk features way before we've actually got an understanding for who the customer is, what their real problems are, not just what they came to us through, whatever the lead form was.



## Sangram Vajre

Chief Evangelist & Co-founder of Terminus, 2x Author, Host of *FlipMyFunnel* Podcast

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When I see some successful, really, really successful salespeople, I think they care about the problem of the customer more than the product they're selling, I think that really changes the conversations.



## Srihari Kumar

49

Chief Commercial Officer at 6sense

I think it is listening and learning from what you hear. Everything changes constantly. The market changes. The only thing that's guaranteed is that the pace of change is only accelerating. The only way to survive that is through learning and listening to your market. If you have that then everything else will fall in place.



## Stephen Shapiro

50

Hall of Fame Speaker, Innovation Instigator at 24/7 Innovation, Business Advisor, & Author

I found the most successful thing is to not sell. As crazy as it sounds, I make relationships with people. I try to add as much value to people as I possibly can without an expectation of a sale, and then the sales always seem to follow that.



## Steve de Mamiel

51

Director at Hostopia, Author of *The Mongrel Method & Sales; Marketing for the New Breed of Buyer*

To find the decision makers, not the decision maker. A lot of sales people get beaten up about finding the decision maker, so you often hear sales management say, "Go find the decision maker. Are you talking to the decision maker?" Today, it's very rarely a single decision maker. It's often a committee or some sort of group that's making that buying decision.



## Tiffani Bova

52

Global Growth Evangelist at Salesforce, Author, & Host of *What's Next Podcast*

I'd say the one thing sales people can actually control every day is their behavior. So I would say this. I would say being prepared is probably the best behavior.





## Tim Sanders

53

VP of Customer Insights at Upwork, Keynote Speaker, & Author of *Love is the Killer App: How to Win Business and Influence Friends*

Curiosity. Digging very deep into what is behind the product or the service. Not just what benefits it offers, but the entire narrative that surrounds it.



## Tom Hopkins

54

Sales Trainer & Speaker at Tom Hopkins International, Inc. & Best-selling Author

Work harder on discipline in your life, and all industries, all business-to-business transactions are based on fundamentals.



## Howard Brown

55

Founder & CEO at ringDNA

As the habits of open-ended questions and listening develop, you will strengthen your ability to build rapport. Strong rapport-building leads to better conversations, which ultimately leads to better sales outcomes. The best sales reps just keep improving because they have unlocked the keys to more meaningful connections.



## Cameron Orr

56

CSO at ringDNA

You have to get through two 'Noes' on every deal before it will close.

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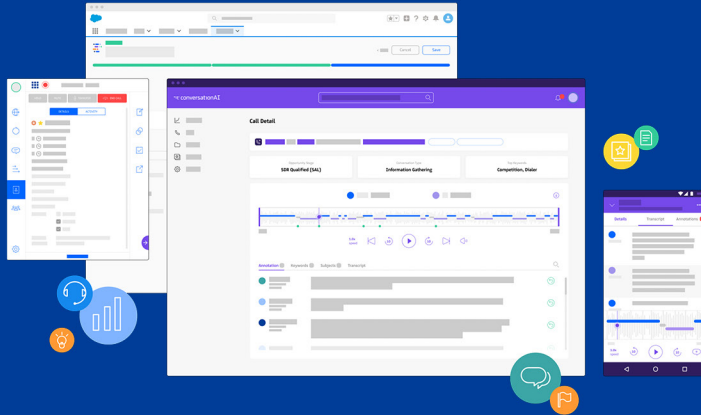
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